

This Week in Congress

August 20, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Health Care Remains Front and Center

The Kansas Hospital Association hosted a town hall meeting on Monday in Hays with hospital administrators, board members and physicians from across the state. I appreciated the opportunity to discuss topics like Medicare reimbursement, J-1 visa doctors, reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the struggles many rural and small hospitals face. Thank you to Fred Lucky of KHA and Dr. John Jeter of Hays Medical Center for hosting the meeting. Health care remains a top priority of mine. I look forward to continuing to work with these professionals to ensure continued quality health care for Kansans.

Funding from USDA to Assist Greensburg in Rebuilding Process

This week, the United States Department of Agriculture released \$5.9 million to assist Greensburg in the rebuilding and recovery process. This is the first allotment of the \$40 million dollars that the Kansas delegation secured in May for recovery efforts.

Of these funds, \$1 million will be available to Greensburg and the surrounding area for recovery planning efforts. The remaining funds will be used for housing, business and community redevelopment efforts.

The residents of Kiowa County have been hard at work these past few months removing debris and laying the groundwork for putting their community back together. The release of this funding will accelerate the process and provide local leaders with additional means to move forward in the development and rebuilding of the community.

Spending Time in Emporia

Flint Hills Beef Fest: On Friday morning, I attended the Flint Hills Beef Fest at the Lyon County Fairgrounds in Emporia. I spoke to cattlemen during WIBW Radio's Ag Issues Seminar about issues affecting the beef industry, including the farm bill, EQUIP funding, risk management, export markets and Country of Origin Labeling.

National Teachers Hall of Fame: Also that morning, I joined Emporia State University President Michael Lane to announce funding for the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia. Funding for the Hall of Fame was recently approved in the U.S. House. The funding will be used for program activities to further the mission and vision of the Hall of Fame, including reaching out to early career teachers and hosting teaching academies for future teachers. The National Teachers Hall of Fame provides deserved recognition for teachers across the country and I am pleased this funding will enable the organization to further its mission. Numerous community and university leaders, including State Senator Nick Jordan and State Representative Don Hill, were in attendance and I thank them for their support.

Visiting with Folks in Southeast Kansas

Greenbush Education Center: I stopped by the Greenbush Southeast Kansas Education Service Center outside of Girard on Wednesday. Greenbush provides a wide range of services, programs and training for communities, schools, administrators, teachers and parents. My thanks to Director David DeMoss for showing me around the facility and the Wm. L. Abernathy Science Center. The center is a model facility for any in Kansas.

Watco Companies: Later that day, I spent time at Watco Companies in Pittsburg to discuss transportation and railroad issues in Kansas. I was able to successfully pass a rehabilitation tax credit in Congress in 2004 to help companies reinvest in shortline railroad tracks. This is especially important in Kansas where we utilize the railroads for shipping agriculture commodities and other products. Special thanks to the chief executive officer of Watco, Rick Webb, for the opportunity to visit about ways we can continue working to improve shortline rail services in Kansas.

Pittsburg State University: Also while in town, I met with President Tom Bryant of Pittsburg State University. I enjoyed visiting campus and talking with President Bryant about the university's priorities and the good things going on at PSU.

Midwest Minerals: I also visited Midwest Minerals to meet with the company's chief executive officer, George Nettels, and president, Steve Sloan, and talk about our state's aggregate and road construction business. This is Midwest Minerals' 60th year in business. The Pittsburg-based company provides crushed stone products that are used in road materials and also produce finely ground limestone for agricultural use. My meeting with Mr. Nettels and Mr. Sloan follows a visit with Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller to discuss the adequacy of bridges in Kansas. This issue will be front and center when I return to Washington, D.C., as the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure begins hearings about the safety of U.S. bridges.

Crawford County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting: I joined Crawford County Farm Bureau members for their annual meeting on Wednesday evening at Girard High School. Thank you to county president James Michael for the invitation to speak to the group. I enjoyed visiting with the Farm Bureau members about agriculture issues, including the 2007 Farm Bill, and learning about the current challenges in agriculture in southeast Kansas.

Southeast Superintendents Meeting: On Thursday morning, I was in Independence to join area superintendents and school officials for a discussion about No Child Left Behind. I discussed legislation I have introduced to ease the burdens it has placed on Kansas educators and students. I appreciated the insight and ideas shared with me by these officials. Thank you to Chuck Schmidt, Superintendent of Independence schools, for the invitation to visit with the group.

Cobalt Boats: For 40 years, Neodesha has been home to Cobalt Boats - a manufacturer of luxury sportboats. I stopped by the facility on Thursday and enjoyed visiting with Pack St. Clair, Chairman of the Board. It is always enjoyable to see businesses such as Cobalt Boats enjoying much success in small Kansas towns. Mr. St. Clair discussed with me the continued need for a technical and trained workforce in southeast Kansas.

Iola Rotary: I joined the Iola Rotary club for lunch on Thursday and provided a congressional update on issues such as agriculture, health care, education and energy. I am a fellow Rotarian and appreciate president Aline Knedlika giving me the opportunity to attend the meeting.

Rallying for Boeing to Secure Contract for Refueling Tankers

At the end of the week, I spoke at a rally in Wichita in support of the KC-767 Tanker and the employees of Boeing. The KC-767 is a refueling tanker and plays an important role in our national defense program. Over the years, Boeing has built nearly 2,000 refueling tankers and many of those are becoming obsolete. Boeing is currently competing with Airbus, based in France, for a contract to construct the KC-767 Advanced Tanker for the U.S. Air Force. This contract would mean more than 3,800 jobs in Kansas and an estimated \$145 million of economic impact annually. This contract should stay in America and the tanker should be built by Kansans. I would like to thank Jim Albaugh, president and chief executive officer of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems, for the invitation to speak at the event along with Congressman Todd Tiahrt and Kansas Secretary of Commerce David Kerr.

Attending the Rooks County Free Fair

On Friday evening, I attended the Rooks County Fair in Stockton. I have been attending the fair since my childhood. Many sleepless nights are spent by parents and children alike preparing for this annual event and it was good to see their efforts pay off. My thanks and congratulations go out to all who had a hand in its success.

Visiting with Small Oil and Gas Producers from Across the State

This weekend, I attended the Kansas Independent Oil and Gas Association's 70th Annual Convention in Wichita. I have attended this convention nearly every year to meet with producers from our state's small oil and gas companies. I enjoyed visiting with folks from across Kansas about energy policy and small business issues, as well as the importance of the oil and gas industry to our state.

In the Office

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Donna Finnell and sons, Robert and Cody, of Salina; Andrea Moran and Dustin Beam of Manhattan; Tom Siemens of Inman; and Cyndi Koehn of Hesston.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

